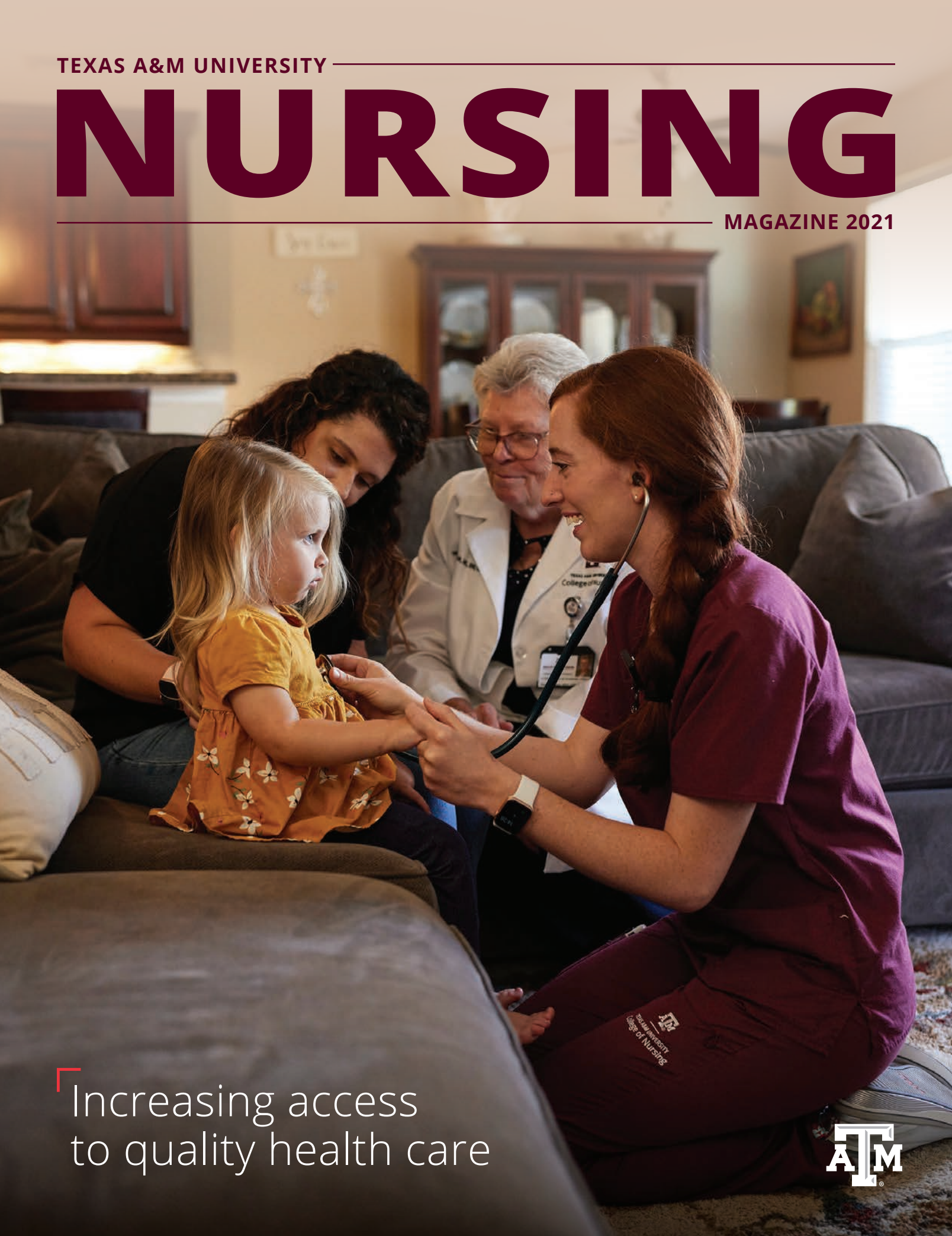
TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY

NURSING

MAGAZINE 2021



Increasing access to quality health care

MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

Welcome to the 2021 issue of the Texas A&M University College of Nursing magazine! Our growing college is dedicated to preparing the next generation of nurses as excellent clinicians, leaders and researchers. I know you share my appreciation for the outstanding work of our faculty, staff, students and former students who are making an impact on access to quality health care, improving health outcomes and improving the health of diverse populations.

Leadership and Excellence are Aggie Core Values, both central to our mission and vision. A new Round Rock leader and faculty experts at both of our program sites embrace these core values while contributing their clinical and research expertise to enrollment growth, new degree programs and scholarly development of students. We are pleased to share the exciting news that our first doctoral program, the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), will launch in the fall of 2022. A new honors program supports the development of future scholars at the undergraduate level. We could not lead these initiatives without our new and continuing faculty experts, especially those who have earned esteemed distinction by the profession and the Texas A&M University System in 2021.

Educating students to understand and address the health needs and challenges of individuals, families and communities requires true partnerships with communities and innovative educational approaches. Faculty-led initiatives in rural health are featured in this issue, including COVID-19 vaccine outreach, initiatives addressing the multiple health challenges of the opioid epidemic, service to the community through the evidence-based Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) program, access to sexual assault care and training as well as innovative models of health care delivery. We remain dedicated to the education of the health care workforce within the context of the health issues of rural and underserved areas.

We are at the forefront of innovation, celebrating provisional national accreditation of our Clinical Learning Resource Center and creating clinical simulation with new virtual reality approaches. The quality of our education is greatly enhanced by the continuous pursuit of excellence by our faculty.

With appreciation for all the work of nurses and the support from our wider community,

Nancy Fahrenwald, PhD, RN, PHNA-BC, FAAN
Dean and Professor, College of Nursing

CONTENTS

Introductions

4 Welcoming New Assistant Dean
5 Welcoming New Faculty

Community Practice, Partnerships and Outreach

6 Supporting First-Time Moms
8 Nurse-Led Health Network
10 Addiction Recovery, Prevention
12 Vaccine Confidence

Research and Innovation

14 Bringing Sim To Life
17 SANEs R Us

Education and Current Students

19 Undergrads as Researchers
20 Launching a DNP
21 Simulating Real-Life
22 Weathering The Storm

Honors and recognitions

24 Jane Bolin, JD, PhD, BSN
25 Robin Page, PhD, APRN, CNM, FACNM

Giving

26 Invest In Nurse Leaders, Scientists

WELCOMING NEW ASSISTANT DEAN

With a majority of her career focused on nursing education at the collegiate level, Star Mitchell, PhD, RN, CCRN-K, brings a wealth of expertise to her new role as Assistant Dean for Distant-Site Round Rock at Texas A&M University College of Nursing.

Dr. Mitchell serves as a vital member of the executive team, leading the accredited undergraduate nursing education program in Round Rock to assure ongoing national recognition of Texas A&M College of Nursing as a Center of Excellence in Nursing Education by the National League for Nursing.

Prior to joining Texas A&M University, Dr. Mitchell served as Assistant Professor and Undergraduate Program Director for St. David's School of Nursing at Texas State University in Round Rock where she directed the development and implementation of the baccalaureate nursing curriculum, assisted in program evaluation and served as a liaison to advance educational achievement of BSN-prepared registered nurses. She also promoted an interdisciplinary approach to nursing education and health care, both internally and externally, to support positive patient outcomes through collaboration among providers.

Throughout her career in higher education, Dr. Mitchell's passion to serve continues to grow as demonstrated by her appointment to a variety of committees and boards including those leading efforts in reaccreditation, internal review, total program and faculty evaluation, scholarship, strategic planning and curriculum.

Dr. Mitchell earned a bachelor's degree in nursing from Florida State University followed by a master's degree in nursing from East Carolina State University. She pursued her doctorate degree in nursing from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

WELCOMING NEW FACULTY

Gina Rowe, PhD, DNP, MPH, RN, FNP-BC, PHCNS-BC, CNE
Clinical Assistant Professor

Dr. Gina Rowe is a board-certified Family Nurse Practitioner and Clinical Nurse Specialist with more than 17 years of experience as a Certified Nurse Educator teaching undergraduate and graduate courses. During her tenure at the University of Maryland School of Nursing, she served as an Assistant Professor and as the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) – Family Nurse Practitioner Program (FNP) Coordinator. Prior to her time at the University of Maryland, Dr. Rowe served as an Assistant Professor at South Dakota State University College of Nursing.

As a Clinical Nurse Specialist, Dr. Rowe has more than 22 years of experience in serving low-income, vulnerable client populations. In addition to serving as a faculty member, she has provided patient-centered care at a variety of community health centers, a school-based wellness center and a mobile clinic as an FNP.

As a Clinical Associate Professor at our Bryan-College Station campus, Dr. Rowe teaches courses in support of registered nurses seeking an advanced degree in nursing with an emphasis on those enrolling in the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program launched this year.

Muna Bhattarai, PhD, MA, RN
Assistant Professor

Dr. Muna Bhattarai joined us from the University of Wisconsin-Madison's Department of Rehabilitation Psychology and Special Education where she served as a graduate assistant, teaching both in-person and online didactic and clinical courses in rehabilitation counseling. She supervised and mentored graduate and undergraduate students in their practicum and internships while also contributing to research and scholarship.

Prior to her role at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Dr. Bhattarai served as a nursing lecturer at Hope International College in Kathmandu, Nepal. There she taught undergraduate didactic and clinical courses, advised nursing students in their research and supervised students as they completed hospital and community hours in completion of their practicum.

As a tenure-track Assistant Professor, Dr. Bhattarai teaches nursing students, participates in service activities and actively participates in research and scholarship.

Ping Ye, MSN, APRN, ACNS, ACHPN
Clinical Assistant Professor

Ping Ye is an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) with 5 years of teaching experience in supporting undergraduate students in the University of Texas at Austin Schools of Biological Science and Nursing. During this time, she has also supported graduate education by precepting multiple graduate students from the University of Texas Alternate Entry – MSN program and medical students from the University of Texas Dell Medical School.

Ping also has more than 12 years of experience providing comprehensive, evidence-based clinical practice for geriatric and adult populations through direct patient care. Her areas of expertise include acute and chronic illness management, interprofessional collaboration, consultation and nursing education in nursing homes, assisted living facilities and residential home settings. Ping specializes in palliative care consultation and end-of-life comfort support.

As Clinical Assistant Professor at our Round Rock campus, Ping teaches pre-licensure baccalaureate nursing students enrolled in the Second Degree BSN track.

SUPPORTING FIRST-TIME MOMS

$3 MILLION GRANT OFFERS IN-HOME NURSE VISITS FOR BRAZOS COUNTY FAMILIES

Empowering vulnerable first-time moms to transform their lives and create better futures for themselves and their babies is at the heart of Nurse-Family Partnership®, a nationwide community health program. Grant funds totaling $3 million have been awarded to a team of researchers at Texas A&M University College of Nursing to initiate this evidence-based program in Brazos County. Research consistently proves that Nurse-Family Partnership® succeeds at its most important goals: keeping children healthy and safe, and improving the lives of mothers and their babies. Specially trained registered nurses will support first-time mothers through regularly scheduled home visits, starting early in the pregnancy and continuing through the child's second birthday. With an emphasis on low-income, first-time moms, women voluntarily enroll as early as possible but must elect to do so in advance of their 28th week of pregnancy to participate.

"New moms develop a close relationship with a registered nurse who becomes a trusted resource they can rely on for advice on everything from safely caring for their child to taking steps to provide a stable, secure future for their new family," said Robin Page, PhD, APRN, CNM, FACNM, assistant professor at the College of Nursing and principal investigator for the grant award. "This relationship fosters confidence and offers vulnerable first-time mothers with a network of supportive caregivers as they navigate motherhood."

An initial cohort of three registered nurses will be dedicated to serving first-time mothers, offering support through the emotional, social and physical challenges they face in preparation for a healthy birth. Prenatal guidance is the starting point, but nurses will continue to provide care post-delivery, helping the new mother and child by teaching skills that foster growth and development. Current prelicensure nursing students will have the opportunity to shadow these RNs and gain firsthand experience as they complete clinical hours as part of the bachelor's degree in nursing curriculum.

Each registered nurse will serve 25 to 30 first-time mothers and their children within Brazos County, which includes the cities of Bryan, College Station, Millican, Kurten and Wixon Valley. In addition to the nurse home visits, mothers that enroll will have access to specialized counseling services through the Texas A&M Counseling and Assessment Clinic. This

> New moms develop a close relationship with a registered nurse who becomes a trusted resource they can rely on for advice on everything from safely caring for their child to taking steps to provide a stable, secure future for their new family.
>
> ROBIN PAGE
> PhD, APRN, CNM, FACNM

includes a range of services, including emotional and cognitive development assessment for the infant, and overall mental health support for the new mother.

A community health worker has also joined the team to serve as one of the primary liaisons within the Brazos County community, providing outreach and engagement with current and potential supporters of the initiative. Once the program is fully underway, a fourth registered nurse dedicated to home visits is set to join the college in 2022.

As part of the grant application process, letters of support were provided by the Brazos Valley Health Coalition, Voices for Children—Court Appointed Special Advocates, College Station ISD Early Education Services and Catholic Charities of Central Texas. Clinical advocates currently include The Prenatal Clinic, HealthPoint, Texas A&M Health Family Care and Texas A&M Counseling and Assessment Clinic.

The goals of Nurse-Family Partnership® at Texas A&M University College of Nursing are to: Improve pregnancy outcomes by helping women engage in preventive health practices, including thorough prenatal care from their health care providers, improving their diets and reducing their use of cigarettes, alcohol and other substances; improve child health and development by helping parents provide responsible and competent care; improve the economic self-sufficiency of the family by helping parents develop a vision for their own future, plan future pregnancies, continue their education and find work.

First-time mothers may be referred by their obstetrician, may self-enroll or may be directed by an advocate as a recipient of state-funded health benefits including CHIP or Medicaid. To learn more about Nurse-Family Partnership® at Texas A&M University College of Nursing, please visit **nursing.tamu.edu/nfp**.

The interdisciplinary project team includes Principal investigator Robin Page, PhD, APRN, CNM, FACNM, Assistant Professor, Texas A&M College of Nursing, and co-investigators Cindy Weston, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, CHSE, Associate Dean for Clinical and Outreach Affairs and Associate Professor, and Alison Pittman, PhD, RN, CPN, CNE, CHSE, Clinical Assistant Professor, Texas A&M College of Nursing; Heather Clark, DrPH, Director of Public Health Practice and Research Assistant Professor, Texas A&M School of Public Health; and Krystal Simmons, PhD, Clinical Associate Professor of Educational Psychology, Texas A&M University College of Education and Human Development, and Executive Director of the Texas A&M Counseling & Assessment Clinic (CAC).

NURSE-LED HEALTH NETWORK

$1.5 MILLION GRANT SUPPORTS INTEGRATION OF HEALTH SERVICES IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

Texas A&M College of Nursing researchers are working with rural health care providers to increase access to quality care in Central Texas. Collaborative partnerships integrate behavioral health and primary care services in rural health clinics to enhance patient care while providing education and training opportunities for future nurse leaders.

Over the course of three years, a $1.5 million Human Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) grant will be used to establish an academic-practice partnership with five different clinical sites to provide primary care led by family nurse practitioners (FNPs) strategically integrating with behavioral health services. With the College of Nursing as the hub of an integrated health network, students will have the opportunity to be immersed in clinical education and training while increasing access to care in underserved areas of the state.

Led by Cindy Weston, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, CHSE, associate dean for clinical and outreach affairs and associate professor, a team of nurses from the college have established a Nurse-led Collaborative Integrated Behavioral Health Rural Network (N-CIBHR). The research team includes Robin Page, PhD, APRN, CNM, assistant professor, as the project evaluator; Elizabeth Wells-Beede, PhD, RN, C-EFM, CHSE, clinical assistant professor, as the virtual reality simulation director; and Martha Hare, DNP, RN, FNP-BC, clinical assistant professor, as the curriculum coordinator.

This unique collaboration offers an innovative approach in addressing health care disparities by utilizing nurses to the fullest extent of their education and licensure while also supporting future nursing generations through firsthand clinical experiences. As part of the grant-funded project, there are two external partners—Bluebonnet Trails Community Services, a local mental health authority (LMHA), and B.I.S. Community Clinic, a designated rural health clinic (RHC)—offering both primary care and behavioral health services that would otherwise be inaccessible to patients in these rural areas of Texas.

“Integrating primary care with behavioral health services improves the patient experience and health outcomes as well as reducing costs and delays in treatment,” Weston said. This integration will include both in-person and telehealth models of care delivery to patients with acute and chronic conditions, and will include a specific emphasis on opioid use disorder (OUD) prevention and treatment. The interprofessional collaboration outlines the

placement of a licensed psychiatric-mental health care professional in a school-based clinic and the expansion of integrated behavioral health services offered by Bluebonnet Trails Community Services. In addition, telebehavioral health services will now be offered through the B.I.S. Community Clinic.

Andrea Richardson, executive director of Bluebonnet Trails, said this partnership will reduce barriers for patients seeking quality care in these rural areas. “Psychiatric care through virtual visits broadens access to specialty care while responding to an increasing professional shortage. Licensed, certified and qualified professionals providing psychiatric evaluations, medication reviews, counseling, skills building and care coordination improve the patient experience by decreasing or eliminating stressful travel time and costs, and increasing engagement through convenient, integrated health care,” Richardson said.

To support nursing students and better prepare them for delivering patient-centered care through telebehavioral health services, virtual reality simulation and telehealth delivery models will be key components in the educational objective of the project. Immersing students in care delivery through these technologies provides them with unique experience serving patients via telehealth, for both those entering the nursing workforce and those who are already professional, working nurses. The skills and comfort level needed in providing patient-centered care remotely will be fostered as nursing students use the technologies currently in place as part of their clinical education.

Elizabeth Ellis, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, CRHCP, owner and operator of the B.I.S. Community Clinic and adjunct faculty in the college, said this collaboration sets the stage for establishing viable solutions in delivering quality care in underserved areas. “Given the limited access to behavioral health providers, this blended approach to rural health care and education will create synergy for our patients, students and the communities which we serve through the development of a sustainable model,” Ellis said.

Students pursuing a graduate nursing degree with a family nurse practitioner (MSN-FNP) specialization and prelicensure undergraduate nursing students with an expressed interest in behavioral health have the opportunity to obtain valuable work experience and complete clinical hours through this innovative, collaborative partnership.

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of award 1 UD7HP37638-01-00 totaling $1.5M with zero percentage financed with nongovernmental sources. The contents of this announcement are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

GIDDINGS CLINIC

Services offered

- Autism Treatment
- Substance Use Recovery
- Family Medical Care
- Behavioral Health
- Early Childhood Intervention
- 24-Hour Crisis Care
- Intellectual and Developmental Disability Supports

ADDICTION RECOVERY, PREVENTION

COMBATTING THE OPIOID CRISIS WITH COMMUNITY-BASED INTERVENTIONS

A research team led by Texas A&M University College of Nursing was selected as one of 30 award recipients nationwide to receive federal grant funding through the Rural Communities Opioid Response Program-Neonatal Abstinence Syndrome (RCORP-NAS). As part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), through the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Federal Office of Rural Health Policy (FORHP), this $500,000 grant award allows expansion of ongoing efforts to support women, children and families in rural areas impacted by opioid use disorder.

In Texas, 52 percent of child fatalities caused by maltreatment and 68 percent of cases where children were removed from their homes were related to parent or caregiver substance use. The Golden Crescent Children's Advocates for Recovery Equity (GC-CARE) is an initiative designed to reduce the incidence and impact of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) (the group of conditions caused by withdrawal from certain drugs an infant is exposed to in the womb before birth) in rural communities by improving access to quality care, family support systems and social determinants of health.

Over the course of three years, the nurse-led project team will advance GC-CARE through a multi-faceted approach to encourage prevention, offer quality care, support families in recovery and provide valuable resources to health care professionals combatting substance use disorder (SUD). To do so, the research team has initiated strategic partnerships among health systems, community organizations, recovery centers and fellow stakeholders in the Golden Crescent region, an area that includes rural communities in Gonzales, Lavaca, DeWitt, Jackson, Calhoun and Victoria counties.

> GC-CARE is an initiative designed to reduce the incidence and impact of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) in rural communities by improving access to quality care.

Increasing access to quality care remains one of the top priorities in advancing health and patient outcomes in rural, underserved areas. GC-CARE will include the initiation of telehealth solutions to provide access to screening, treatment and recovery services, including telebehavioral health, and care coordination to enhance referral and treatment for women at-risk for or with SUD. Online continuing education offerings on proper identification and treatment of SUD in pregnancy, management of childbirth and NAS, and support of parents of newborns in recovery,

will also be developed to help ensure providers and stakeholders have access to timely, evidence-based practice to offer specialized care.

Reducing the stigma among those recovering and offering proactive, attainable measures to prevent SUD also play a vital role in GC-CARE. The development of a parent recovery program to provide one-on-one peer support for rural parents in recovery and school-based education, with an emphasis on preventing substance use, are both outlined. With an increased awareness on evidence-based prevention, treatment and management of SUD and NAS, this initiative within the Golden Crescent will help promote healthy babies and mothers, and keep families intact.

"When a mother, father, sister or brother struggles with substance use disorder, the entire family struggles," said Jane Bolin, PhD, JD, BSN, associate dean for research and regents professor at the College of Nursing and lead principal investigator. "This grant focuses on neonatal abstinence syndrome prevention as well as childhood neglect, trauma and abuse. Our goals are to address the needs of children and their families. Under the leadership of Drs. Nancy Downing and Jodie Gary as principal investigators, an amazing team has been pulled together with the capacity to concentrate efforts in building recovery capital to support parents with substance and opioid use disorder and protect vulnerable newborns, children and families."

Announcement of the nationwide RCORP-NAS grant funding was first shared by HRSA Administrator Thomas J. Engels in person at the Texas A&M University Health Science Center (Texas A&M Health) in Bryan, Texas. "We are excited to celebrate these awards during National Recovery Month," Engels said. "RCORP-NAS will provide needed funding to rural residents grappling with the opioid epidemic to help many people reach recovery." Through the RCORP initiative, federal grant funding will help rural communities address barriers to care and the additional strains COVID-19 has placed on both rural individuals with substance use disorder and on rural organizations providing prevention, treatment and recovery services.

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling $200,000 with zero percentage funded by nongovernment source(s). The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA/HHS, or the U.S. Government.

FEDERAL GRANT AWARD ANNOUNCED DURING NATIONAL RECOVERY MONTH

Pictured above are John Sharp, Chancellor of The Texas A&M University System; Jodie Gary, PhD, RN, and Nancy Downing, PhD, RN, SANE-A, SANE-P, FAAN, Texas A&M College of Nursing faculty members; and Thomas J. Engels, HRSA Administrator.

The project team includes co-principal investigators Jane Bolin, PhD, JD, BSN, Associate Dean for Research and Regents Professor, Nancy Downing, PhD, RN, SANE-A, SANE-P, FAAN, Associate Professor, Texas A&M College of Nursing, and Jodie Gary, PhD, RN, Assistant Professor, Texas A&M College of Nursing; and co-investigators Carly McCord, PhD, Director of Telebehavioral Health and Clinical Assistant Professor, Texas A&M College of Medicine, Sidney Ontai, MD, Assistant Professor, Texas A&M College of Medicine DeTAR Family Practice Residency Program, Joy Alonzo, ME, PharmD, Clinical Assistant Professor, Texas A&M College of Pharmacy, and Alison Pittman, PhD, RN, CPN, CNE, CHSE, Clinical Assistant Professor, Sharon Dormire, Associate Dean for Undergraduate Nursing Education and Professor, Robin Page, PhD, APRN, CNM, Assistant Professor, and Cindy Weston, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, CHSE, Associate Dean for Clinical and Outreach Affairs and Associate Professor, Texas A&M College of Nursing.

VACCINE CONFIDENCE

INITIATIVE LEADS VACCINE EDUCATION IN RURAL TEXAS COMMUNITIES

Approximately 60 million people in the United States reside in rural counties, representing almost one-fifth of the nation's population, yet only 39 percent of adults in those rural areas have received a COVID-19 vaccine according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Texas A&M University College of Nursing received $50,000 in federal grant funding as a collaborative partner with the B.I.S. Community Clinic to provide COVID-19 vaccine education, training and administration in 12 counties within the greater Brazos Valley. These include Brazos, Grimes, Walker, Montgomery, Madison, Leon, Robertson, Waller, Washington, Burleson, Lee and Fayette.

The Rural Health Clinic Expanded Vaccine Uptake Program (REV-UP) aims to bolster vaccine confidence by leveraging existing health care resources within rural communities through academic partnership to support ongoing efforts in combatting misinformation. As part of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) Federal Office of Rural Health Policy's (FORHP) Rural Health Clinic

Vaccine Confidence Program, the grant award provides an opportunity for rural health clinics across the United States—like B.I.S. Community Clinic—additional resources in improving health care through educational campaigns and community engagement initiatives.

"As a Rural Health Clinic our mission is to deliver health care close to home," said Elizabeth Ellis, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, FAANP, CRHCP, president and director of clinical operations at B.I.S. Community Clinic. "We are delighted that Texas A&M University College

> Texas A&M College of Nursing focuses on empowering nurses to improve the health of rural populations.
>
> CYNTHIA WESTON
> DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, CHSE

of Nursing has agreed to join us in caring for our community and beyond."

Rural communities often have a higher number of residents without health insurance, live with chronic health conditions, are 65 years of age and older, and have limited access to quality health care, placing them at increased risk for COVID-19. Through activities led by community health workers familiar with and trusted by the patient population served, faculty and undergraduate students from the Texas A&M College of Nursing will actively reinforce factual messages regarding prevention and treatment of COVID-19 and other infectious diseases.

"Texas A&M College of Nursing focuses on empowering nurses to improve the health of rural populations," said Cynthia Weston, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, CHSE, associate dean for clinical and outreach affairs and associate professor at the College of Nursing. "We are excited to partner with B.I.S. Community Clinic and Dr. Ellis to improve health in rural Texas."

Under the direction of B.I.S. Community Health Clinic, the College of Nursing will support ongoing efforts to increase COVID-19 vaccination rates among rural and underserved communities to promote and improve population health and wellness.

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of award 1 G29RH43335-01-00 totaling $49,529 with zero percentage financed with non-governmental sources. The contents are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement, by HRSA, HHS, or the U.S. Government.

BRINGING SIM TO LIFE

ENHANCING NURSING EDUCATION, ACCESS VIA VIRTUAL REALITY

There is simply nothing quite like a pandemic to force change, disrupt day-to-day life and be completely unforgiving in the challenges it brings. While COVID-19 shifted all aspects of daily interactions across the world, it also brought new attention to opportunities that support nurse educators and their students.

Increasing Nursing Access across Populations with Technology – or INPACTS for short – is an initiative led by Elizabeth Wells-Beede, PhD, RN, C-EFM, CHSE, clinical assistant professor at Texas A&M University College of Nursing. Federally-funded through a grant award from the Health Resources and Services Administration's Nurse Education, Practice, Quality, Retention (NEPQR) – Simulation Education Training (SET) program, INPACTS is designed to enhance nursing education and strengthen the nursing workforce by expanding experiential learning opportunities through simulation.

> "Our ultimate goal for implementation is to integrate the virtual reality platform throughout the prelicensure undergraduate program and curriculum, in its entirety.
>
> ELIZABETH WELLS-BEEDE
> PhD, RN, C-EFM, CHSE

"The INPACTS program offers an opportunity to strengthen the capacity for BSN-prepared nurses through enhanced health care education simulation," Wells-Beede said. "Our goal is to support students seeking an undergraduate nursing degree in their ability to better address public health needs of patients in underserved areas and rural populations by seeing a wide range of cases simulated through virtual reality scenarios."

During the initial year of the grant award, College of Nursing faculty on the interdisciplinary research team will revise the current curriculum to align with the newly updated American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Essentials, the nationally accepted guiding principles that outline curriculum content

and expected competencies of nursing graduates. In addition, the INPACTS team in collaboration with faculty will determine how to integrate the virtual reality simulations within the curriculum to support advanced experiential learning.

In addition to the curricular revisions, within the next two years the INPACTS team will create scenarios utilizing the Healthcare Simulation Standards of Best Practice™. This virtual reality experience will incorporate never before seen or utilized scenarios to enhance learning within the undergraduate program and support learners in meeting the outcomes and competencies of the nursing program.

"The ongoing development of the simulations will build on the robust learning opportunities already led by faculty in collaboration with the Clinical Learning Resource Center at Texas A&M Health, which was recently awarded provisional accreditation by the Society for Simulation in Healthcare," said Wells-Beede. "Our BSN-prepared students are already provided with amazing opportunities to care for the simulated patient in an acute care setting. Virtual reality creates an additional avenue to increase their confidence while preparing them for challenging health care situations at the bed side and beyond."

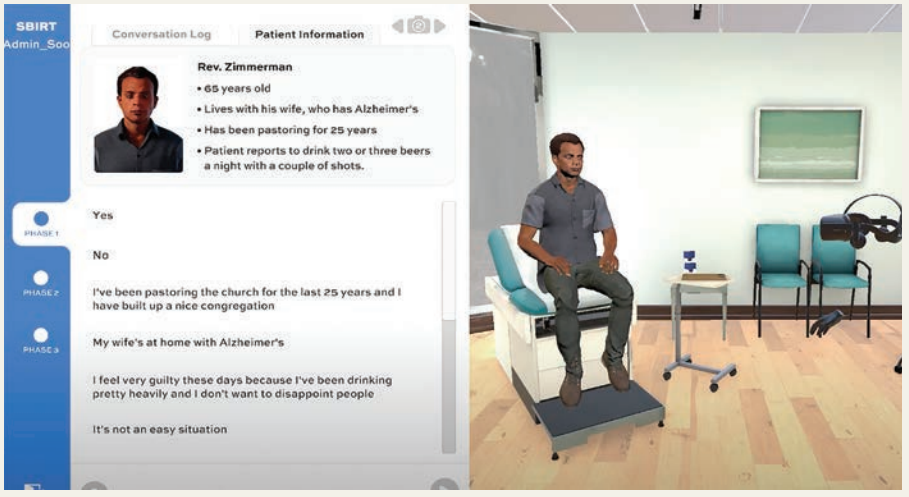
Expansion of the simulation program through virtual reality further supports the development of well-rounded graduates capable of providing quality health care for patients in a variety of settings. With boosted confidence through experiences in a controlled environment, students gain valuable insight on managing the care of challenging and complex scenarios before entering the nursing

workforce in turn increasing access to quality care. Part of the multidisciplinary team includes the College of Architecture's Department of Visualization at Texas A&M University. Their faculty and current students will be directly responsible for helping the College of Nursing establish new virtual reality simulations directly supporting the education of pre-licensure BSN students. With their talent and expertise in visualization of nursing principles, the patient encounter scenarios developed will be brought to life, engaging graduates as they pursue a deeper understanding of the care needed by patients within different populations and communities.

"Our ultimate goal for implementation is to integrate the virtual reality platform throughout the prelicensure undergraduate program and curriculum, in its entirety," said Wells-Beede. "With this integration, an opportunity will be afforded to all students enrolled in the program, including our traditional and second degree BSN students." With the newly established honors program focused on nursing research for undergraduates, eligible students have the chance to take part in the ongoing research. They will be infused in the literature, the development and the integration of the simulations through mentorship by faculty serving on the INPACTS research team.

Once developed, piloted and implemented, Wells-Beede hopes to share the virtual reality simulations

with the larger community to serve as a teaching tool for fellow nurse educators. "The virtual reality simulations have the potential to offer support to other nursing programs interested in expanding the scope of BSN- prepared registered nurses within the community and public health setting."



This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) as part of an award totaling $1.5M with zero percentage financed with nongovernmental sources. The contents of this announcement are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the official views of, nor an endorsement by, HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

SANEs R US

$4.8 MILLION IN FEDERAL, STATE FUNDS GRANTED TO INCREASE NUMBER OF CERTIFIED FORENSIC NURSES IN TEXAS

To understand the scope of territory health care workers serve, Texas spans more than 265,000 square miles and has 838 hospitals publicly listed through the Texas Hospital Association. There are fewer than 400 certified sexual assault nurse examiners (SANEs) statewide—fewer than two per publicly listed hospital—with a majority found in urban areas.

"As forensic nurses, we care for patients during some of the worst moments of their lives every day," said Stacey Mitchell, DNP, MBA, MEd, RN, SANE-A, SANE-P, DF-AFN, FAAN, clinical professor at Texas A&M College of Nursing and director of the Texas A&M Health Center of Excellence in Forensic Nursing. "What began as a simple goal has grown exponentially into an ambitious outreach and continuing education program increasing the number of certified sexual assault nurse examiners across Texas."

Backed by federal funding from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Texas SANEs R US is now in its fourth year. After successfully building a comprehensive forensic nursing continuing education program that encompasses adult, adolescent and pediatric care under an initial three-year grant, a $1.47 million continuation grant was awarded to support ongoing course offerings. In the last year – even amid the COVID-19 pandemic – more than 813 contact hours across 45 courses were offered.

"Our simulation program is the first of its kind in Texas," said Mitchell. "Learners have the opportunity to walk through every stage of supporting a patient that has survived intentional violence and sexual assault, from documentation to photographing injuries to testifying in court." They interact with specially trained standardized patients, going step-by-step through the interview process, assessing injuries sustained and completing medical forensic pelvic exams.

The Office of the Texas Attorney General first charged the forensic nursing team with reviewing and updating the state-sponsored education course with a $500,000 grant in 2017. In their findings, one of the most challenging requirements to complete in order to sit for the state's SANE certification exam found was in relation to pelvic examinations.

"With one of the greatest challenges for learners being able to complete the required number of pelvic exams, we leveraged the opportunity to reduce the time between didactic courses and completion of those exams," said Mitchell. "Through specially trained standardized patient interactions, we are able

to expedite an RN's goal of earning SANE certification in Texas by integrating those exams into our courses." The grant funding directly supports eligible learners by covering the costs of employing standardized patients simulating a sexual assault survivor, the supplies and sexual assault evidence kits used to perform a medical forensic pelvic exam, and travel expenses for the learner.

To ensure all facets of the program teach through real-life scenarios – even outside the exam room – learners engage in structured opportunities to build and improve skills for testifying in open court. In partnership with the Brazos County District Attorney's office, RNs participate in mock testimony and experience cross examination as if they are truly testifying as part of a court case. "It can be intimidating because many nurses fear their testimony can negatively impact their lives, even their careers as a licensed health care provider," said Laurie Charles, MSN, RN, CA-CPSANE, SANE-A, SANE-P, CHSE, clinical assistant professor at the college. "In our course, they are able to practice with questions posed directly by licensed attorneys and gain confidence in sharing facts that shape the outcome of a case, both for the survivor and the perpetrator."

There is a strategic effort to increase the number of SANEs in rural and underserved areas of Texas. The forensic nursing team is actively recruiting nurses that live in these communities to participate in the program and has additional financial support to do so.

"In fall 2021, the Texas A&M College of Nursing received an increase in funding from the state legislature to extend additional resources to maintain forensic nursing continuing education courses established through the HRSA funded initiative," said Mitchell. "With the additional appropriation, we are able to broaden our scope and increase the number of learners accepted into the program, equipping them to better serve sexual assault victims in rural and underserved communities in Texas.

In addition to the recruitment and retention of on-site forensic nurses, the college is leading efforts in providing teleSANE support for health care providers without a forensic nursing program. "The Texas Teleforensic Remote Assistance Center (Tex-TRAC) offers clinical support 24-hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for partnering hospitals and clinics, a number that is growing," said Mitchell. "Forensic nurses are available for on-site clinicians that do not have a SANE on staff to provide guidance as their emergency department care providers perform medical forensic exams and interact with victims of sexual assault."

With state-of-the-art technology, teleSANEs are able to interact with the patient and on-site clinician during a medical forensic exam. "It's always better to provide care for patients at the first hospital they present to because it takes a lot of courage to seek health care after sexual assault," said Nancy Downing, PhD, RN, CP-SANE, SANE-A, FAAN, associate professor at the college. "The innovative teleforensic health care service helps reduce the burden on patients, meaning they won't have to transfer to hospitals with a forensic nursing program, sometimes hours away, and they won't have to talk about the trauma repeatedly. Expert SANEs are available 24 hours a day to guide health care providers through exams, offering support and confidence, to minimize risk of further trauma."

CLINICIAN HOTLINE

With $4 million in combined funding from the Office for Victims of Crime and Office of the Attorney General, Tex-TRAC offers 24/7, 365 days a year support for on-site clinicians seeking expert guidance related to forensic nursing care.

1-833-TEX-TRAC

tex-trac.tamu.edu

FORENSIC NURSING CONTINUING EDUCATION

813 nursing contact hours earned

45 courses completed

were completed in 2020 by RNs seeking advanced training in trauma-informed patient care.

forensic-nursing.tamu.edu

UNDERGRADS AS RESEARCHERS

HONORS PROGRAM FOSTERS NURSE SCIENTISTS EARLY IN EDUCATION

The Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Honors Program provides a foundation for high-achieving undergraduate nursing majors to cultivate skills as scholars in developing nursing science, advancing research and preparing for graduate education. As a new initiative, the inaugural BSN honors class was selected from students entering the fall 2020 Traditional BSN cohort from both the Bryan-College Station and Round Rock campuses.

To be eligible for application and consideration, undergraduate nursing students must hold a pre-nursing cumulative GPA of 3.75 or greater, exhibit strong writing skills and demonstrate a history of service to others. Once admitted into the Honors Program, students complete an additional 18 credit hours above the standard pre-licensure curriculum to explore a research topic of interest.

They are matched with a mentor to discover the research process as an undergraduate student and successfully complete a poster, presentation or publication related to their research work under the guidance of their mentor prior to graduation.

This program is envisioned to expand, allowing all eligible students entering a prelicensure BSN degree track to develop skills as scholars and contribute to nursing science as part of their undergraduate education experience.

To learn more about the Texas A&M College of Nursing BSN Honors Program, please visit **nursing.tamu.edu/honors**.

LAUNCHING A DNP

DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE MARKS FIRST DOCTORAL DEGREE FOR COLLEGE

With nationally ranked undergraduate and graduate nursing programs, Texas A&M College of Nursing has expanded degree options to include the college's first doctoral program, a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP).

This part-time clinical doctoral degree program equips advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) and fellow graduate level prepared registered nurses (RNs) to serve in advanced roles as practice-oriented nurse scientists. With courses delivered asynchronously online across seven semesters, course instruction and clinical hours will focus on equipping graduates with skills to translate evidence into practice, measure patient outcomes and transform health care systems.

With a base curriculum of 38-credit hours for APRNs with a minimum of 500 clinical practice hours, or 39- to 41-credit hours for all other applicants, the DNP program builds upon the experiences and education already held by students as professional nurses. Coursework and clinical practicum hours are tailored to address critical health care provider needs by advancing knowledge in systems leadership, outcome improvement and informatics.

"This online doctoral program supports professional working RNs in ensuring they have an evidence-based framework to effectively analyze and evaluate the quality, safety and efficiency of patient care and systems of care," said Nancy Fahrenwald, PhD, RN, PHNA-BC, FAAN, dean and professor of the Texas A&M College of Nursing. "As the first terminal degree offered at Texas A&M College of Nursing, our DNP sets the stage to expand clinical and nursing education as we increase access to quality care and develop the next generation of advanced practice nurse leaders."

Initially approved by The Texas A&M University System Board of Regents on February 4, 2021, to establish a DNP program, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) followed with formal approval for the college to begin program delivery on October 21, 2021.

Earning a doctoral degree in nursing provides the pathway for graduates to pursue or advance their careers as clinical program directors, nurse educators, patient safety and outcome managers, and executives in health care organizations.

The application opened November 1, 2021 with the first cohort of students set to begin their DNP degree coursework at the start of the fall 2022 semester.

To learn more about the Texas A&M University College of Nursing Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) admissions criteria and application process, please visit **nursing.tamu.edu/degrees**.

SIMULATING REAL-LIFE

CLINICAL LEARNING RESOURCE CENTER EARNS PROVISIONAL ACCREDITATION FROM SSH

The Texas A&M Health Clinical Learning Resource Center (CLRC) granted provisional accreditation from the Society for Simulation in Healthcare (SSH) by demonstrating a commitment and attentive focus to the structure and processes for delivering high-quality health care simulation education.

During the two-year provisional period, CLRC personnel will continue to collect data and implement standards of best practice with the intent of applying for full SSH accreditation.

"This accomplishment is a result of the collaborative spirit at all levels within Texas A&M Health," said CLRC Director.

> "This benefits the students through the structure, policies and procedures put forward in this application. This means that learners will encounter scenarios and practices that are on par with other accredited centers.
>
> BRUCE WILLIAMS
> MS, MSN, RN, CHSE, CHSOS

The Society for Simulation in Healthcare (SSH) is an international organization of health care professionals that seeks to improve performance and reduce errors in patient care through the use of simulation. The organization was formed in 2004 by a group of professionals using simulation for education, testing and research in health care. SSH fosters the improvement and application of simulation-based delivery modalities such as human patient simulators, virtual reality, standardized patients and task trainers.

The Texas A&M Health CLRC provides state-of-the-art facilities and personnel to help health care students refine their fundamental and clinical skills in controlled, simulated health care environments. In the CLRC, instructors utilize highly specialized instructional technology, including computer-programmed full-body manikins that can realistically simulate a range of physiological states and responses. The CLRC also provides a standardized patient program that allows students to work with individuals who portray patients of all ages with specific medical conditions.

The application process for SSH accreditation requires a review of all levels of simulation operations and teaching methodologies. It took an interprofessional team of health care educators at Texas A&M Health a year of writing, developing supporting documents and collecting data in order to meet specific application criteria and demonstrate multiple standards. The SSH granted provisional accreditation following a substantial submission with evidence addressing the CLRC's compliance with SSH's core requirements and teaching/education standards.

"Although accreditation is not required, it absolutely shows Texas A&M's commitment to high-quality teaching and learning environments which are very student-centered," Williams said. "This benefits the students through the structure, policies and procedures put forward in this application. This means that learners will encounter scenarios and practices that are on par with other accredited centers."

The provisional window acknowledges the center's plan for implementing what was proposed in the application and allows time to collect data and meet specific metrics. The CLRC must have two years of data and additional evidence to support the application for full accreditation.

The application writers included Angela Mulcahy, PhD, RN, CMSRN, CHSE, clinical associate professor at College of Nursing, and Elizabeth Wells-Beede, PhD, RN, C-EFM, CHSE, clinical assistant professor at the College of Nursing. Hector Chapa, MD, FACOG, clinical assistant professor and director of interprofessional education at the College of Medicine, and Megan Doyel, MS, RN, associate director of the CLRC, served on the interview group.

WEATHERING THE STORM

STUDENTS OFFER WAYS TO LINK DISPLACED FAMILIES WITH HEALTH CARE RESOURCES

A team of students from Texas A&M University Health Science Center (Texas A&M Health) placed first in the 2021 CLARION National Interprofessional Case Competition hosted virtually by the University of Minnesota. Members of the winning team are Blanca Brosig, School of Public Health; Kathleen (Koenig) Riba, College of Nursing; Katlyn Kuruda, Irma Lerma Rangel College of Pharmacy; and Teja Veerati, College of Medicine.

The competition involves interprofessional teams of four students from at least two different health disciplines who are given a case and charged with creating a root cause analysis and devising an innovative solution. They have about a month to prepare before presenting a 20-minute proposal to a panel of expert judges that evaluates their analysis in the context of real-world standards of practice.

This year's case was called "Weathering the Storm" and asked teams to address barriers to health faced by families who relocated from Puerto Rico to Orange County, Florida, following Hurricane Maria in 2017.

"The goal of our project was to connect these individuals in the community who have been displaced to existing resources in Orange County. There's a wealth of resources available, but they're missing that link to get these people in the community connected to them," Riba said.

The winning team's project, which they named Pa'lante, took a three-pronged approach. First, their proposed "screening team" would provide monthly physical and mental health screenings throughout the community, with an emphasis on mental health. Second, their proposed "connect team" would follow up with participants to ensure they're able to access services in the long term. Third, their proposed "emergency team" would provide natural disaster preparedness and support in the event of future hurricanes in Orange County. An administrative team would provide oversight of the project, coordinate logistics and serve as an intermediary between the teams.

"What really sets this team apart is that in addition to having four outstanding individuals, they were truly interprofessional. Four students from four different disciplines, which we have never had before as a winning team," said the team's coach, Gerard Carrino, PhD, MPH, a professor at the School of Public Health and a member of the Interprofessional Education Leadership Team at Texas A&M Health, which drives interprofessional education across the institution. "What made them a number one team at the national competition is that they approached this with an attitude of allowing the community to help itself,

with their guidance, rather than jumping into the community to solve its problems. This is one of the most forgotten basic tenets of public health."

This is the fourth year the Office of Interprofessional Education & Research at Texas A&M Health has sponsored a team to compete at the national CLARION competition, and the first time Texas A&M has won first place. The office hosted a local competition in Bryan-College Station in March, and the winning team advanced to the national competition. The aim of the event is to enable students to achieve a 360-degree perspective on patient safety in today's health care system and how it might be improved.

"We came into this with different experiences, different perspectives," Veerati said. "There were many times in the initial research phase of the project where we would explain things to each other based on either what we learned in our classes or through our research. We would look things up and one of us would say, 'Oh, we're learning about this in my class later this week! I will let you guys know what we discuss.' So, I think bringing those perspectives together was really helpful."

The team also sought input and insight from outside experts to inform their proposed solution. "We were able to reach out to people that we previously worked with in the communities," Brosig said. "At one point we brought in a social worker. None of us know anything about social work, but one of us did know a social worker, so we were able to bring in those skillsets as well. If we hadn't had the contributions of every single person, we would not have been able to develop such a holistic approach with our project."

When asked what stood out to them from this experience, all expressed gratitude for the support they received from the university.

"I have personally received a lot of support from the College of Pharmacy," Kuruda said. "My dean watched the finals and was at the awards. The associate dean was there, two of my professors were there and my three best friends at the college came out to show their support. And even someone from IDSS (the technology group) showed up."

"As I'm coming to the end of my time at Texas A&M, I just want to express how thankful I am to be part of this university, because I think the support that we got is truly unique to the Aggie network and the community that is here at A&M," Riba said. "As I look back, this really shows why I chose Texas A&M, and it's just really sweet to get to experience it at this level as I approach graduation."

JANE BOLIN, JD, PhD, BSN

NAMED REGENTS PROFESSOR BY THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM BOARD OF REGENTS

Jane Bolin, JD, PhD, BSN, first joined Texas A&M Health in August 2001 as an assistant professor in the School of Public Health's Department of Health Policy and Management where she advanced to associate professor in 2007 and finally, added her role as professor in the College of Nursing in a joint appointment just two years later.

For more than a decade Bolin served as the director of the Southwest Rural Health Research Center, a nationally recognized and federally funded center established to address the needs of rural and underserved populations of Texas and the nation. Her dedication and service in leveraging resources in higher education to positively influence the health care landscape across the lifespan remains evident in Bolin's continued efforts as the college's associate dean for research.

Within the last three years, her expertise in health policy, patient advocacy and interdisciplinary collaborations have supported exponential growth in outreach initiatives and extramural research grant funding. Since accepting the associate dean role in 2018, the total amount of grant funds awarded to nursing scientists within the college has more than quadrupled, supporting innovative approaches to addressing health disparities and reducing barriers to quality patient care.

Bolin's experiences, both as a registered nurse in various states and as a former attorney, offer a unique foundation that is translated to her teaching style, fostered in the mentoring of post-doctoral research assistants and demonstrated in her overall commitment to enhancing quality of life for those with chronic disease.

"The service and leadership demonstrated by Dr. Bolin and her efforts to advance research are to be commended," said Nancy Fahrenwald, PhD, RN, PHNA-BC, FAAN, dean and professor of the college. "Her insightful guidance, tenacious spirit and genuine care for serving others brings excellence to every project and inspires those around her."

ROBIN PAGE, PhD, APRN, CNM, FACNM

APPOINTED TO STATEWIDE TEXAS MATERNAL MORTALITY AND MORBIDITY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Robin Page, PhD, APRN, CNM, FACNM, has served in academia for more than 20 years, with the last seven at Texas A&M University College of Nursing. As assistant professor, Page uses her time and talent in teaching graduate students in the Family Nurse Practitioner master's degree specialty, conducting research focusing on preterm birth, pregnancy outcomes and health disparities, and serving as a primary care provider for underserved women.

Her experience and dedication in supporting quality access to care led her to seek a seat on the Texas Maternal Mortality and Morbidity Review Committee (MMMRC) as the certified nurse midwife (CNM) representative. Page was appointed to serve a 6-year term alongside sixteen fellow committee members beginning September 2021, carrying through February 2027.

"I am thrilled with the opportunity to serve in this capacity, engaging with maternal health experts and advocates across the state to support positive outcomes for mothers and their babies," said Page. "This is important, life-changing work that brings together resources, evidence-based practices and providers to reduce pregnancy-related morbidity and death."

As part of the statewide, multidisciplinary committee, Page will contribute to the study and review of pregnancy-related deaths, health conditions and factors that affect the most at-risk mothers, and best practices of other state programs where rates of pregnancy-related deaths have decreased.

BACCALAUREATE, GRADUATE DEGREE PROGRAMS ACCREDITED BY CCNE

The baccalaureate degree programs in nursing and master's degree programs in nursing at Texas A&M University College of Nursing are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (http://www.ccneaccreditation.org) through December 31, 2030. The initial five-year accreditation of the baccalaureate program established in 2008 was awarded in 2009, followed by reaccreditation in 2014 for an additional 10 years. The initial five-year accreditation of graduate degree programs was earned in 2015.

INVEST IN NURSE LEADERS, SCIENTISTS

In less than five years, Texas A&M College of Nursing has added three master's degree specialties, a post-master's certificate in forensic health care, and a clinical doctoral degree program to build upon the initial undergraduate program.

This growth has brought about national prestige for producing skilled and compassionate nurses focused on innovation and excellence. Rapidly becoming one of the university's high-performing units, the college's academic programs, impactful research, and clinical and professional services play an important role in improving health care, population health and nursing throughout Texas and beyond.

With the launch of our Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) clinical degree program, and plans for the launch of a PhD in Nursing program, Jane Bolin, JD,

The new doctoral program opened for application in November 2021 and extends the college's focus on research and educational excellence.

PhD, BSN, established a scholarship where fellow donors may double their impact with a gift to the Doctoral Education in Nursing scholarship.

As a Regents professor and the College of Nursing's associate dean for research, Dr. Bolin created the scholarship for doctoral students and pledged to provide $25,000 in 1:1 matching funds. She also

encourages visionary donors to join her in creating matching gifts for the growth of the college. Inspired by her own time as a registered nurse, Bolin decided to use her Regents professor award stipend to fund the scholarship. “Nurses have an incredible ability to see people and challenges through the lens of caring and problem solving,” she said.

The new doctoral program opened for application in November 2021 and extends the college’s focus on research and educational excellence. “This is a very exciting time for the entire nursing profession but especially for young, visionary, problem-solving nurse scientists,” Bolin added. “All of us who care about Texas A&M University College of Nursing should try to grow, sustain and nurture future nurse leaders.”

SUPPORT THE COLLEGE

Through the generosity of donors, our students can focus on their goal: becoming an Aggie nurse. Your financial contribution may be designated for the college, faculty and student development, or areas of greatest need to support key initiatives in fulfilling our mission as a land-grant university.

YOUR GIFT MATTERS

Every cent counts. Each dollar given supports recruitment and retention of students with the heart to selflessly serve patients, advance their knowledge and provide a better future in health care for all.

1,700+
nursing graduates since 2008

99%
of students successfully graduate

20+
scholarships available thanks to college donors

Visit **nursing.tamu.edu/giving** to make your financial contribution online.

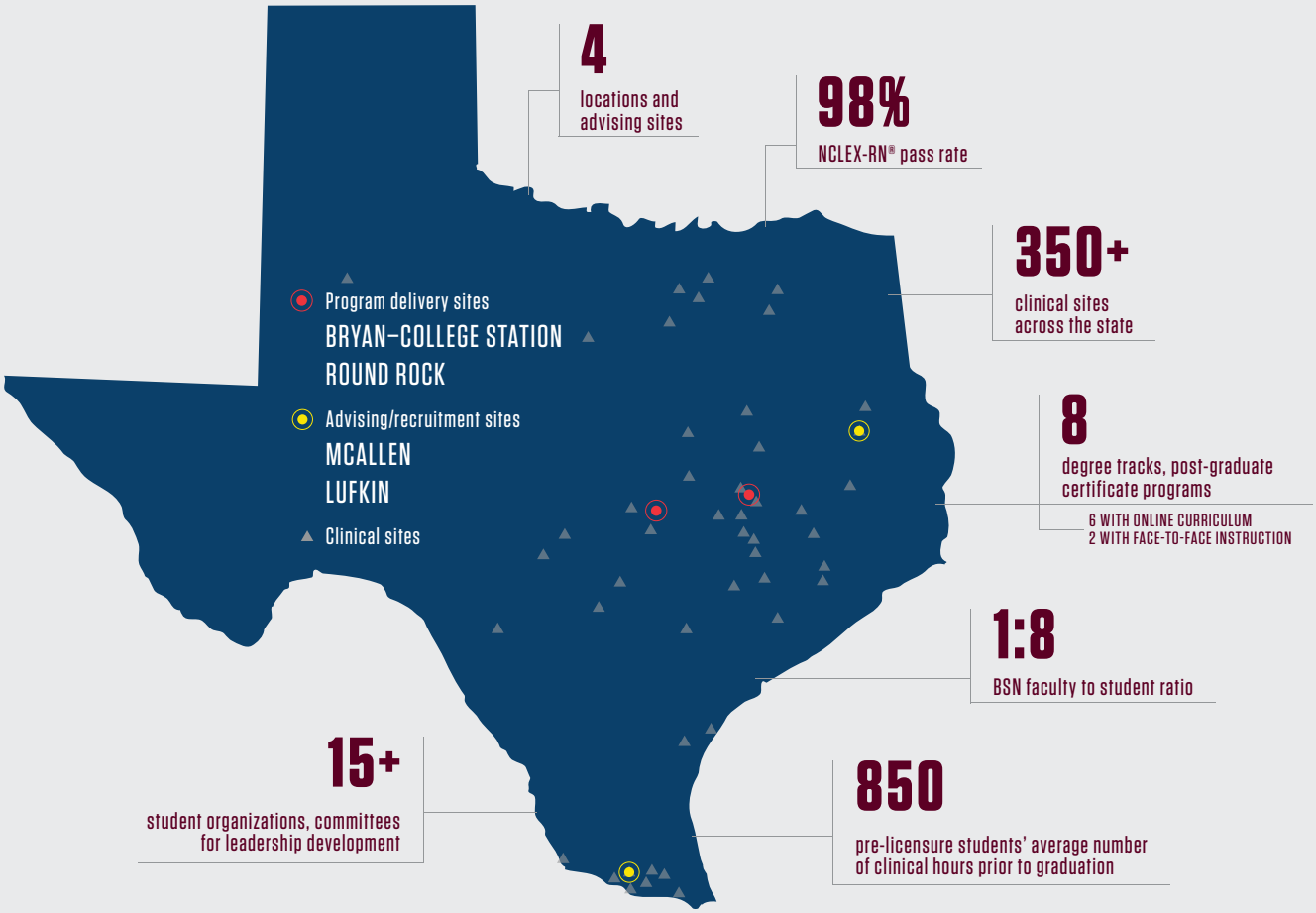
To plan a scholarship, fellowship or endowed gift, please contact Patty Rabel ‘80, CFRE, Senior Director of Development at **prabel@txamfoundation.com**.

TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY
College of Nursing

8447 Riverside Pkwy.
Health Professions Education Building
Bryan, TX 77807

NON-PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
COLLEGE STATION
TEXAS 77842
PERMIT NO. 215

CHANGE SERVICE
REQUESTED



SERVING TEXAS

Transforming health through service, research and practice, the Texas A&M College of Nursing prepares students to lead in the future of health care. We are dedicated to serving the needs of Texas, and beyond, through partnerships and interdisciplinary outreach initiatives. We are Aggie nurses.

nursing.tamu.edu